

## FROM THE DIRECTOR...

### Engaging Parents with Religious Education

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“WHAT DID YOU LEARN TODAY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL?” might be the most commonly asked question parents ask their children in the car after church.

And, the most common answer is... “Nothing.”

**The answer might be caused** by a child who just doesn’t want to talk about it or because the child really didn’t learn anything.

**Another possibility** is that the wrong question is being asked. Because parents don’t know what is happening in most Sunday school classes, they can’t ask a better question.

**TEACHERS CAN HELP.** As you prepare your lesson, prepare three or four facts and three or four questions that you will distribute via email to parents. Keep it all fairly simple; nothing that wouldn’t fit on the visor of a car when printed out.

**Parents now become your co-teachers.** By giving them a few facts, you teach the parents and equip them for the conversation in the car. By giving them a few questions, parents can reinforce what you’ve taught. Mix up the questions from simple answers to open-ended questions that could create a discussion among the family members.

**For example,** for a lesson about the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, you might include the following:

1. St. Helen found the cross in 326 AD. She was St. Constantine’s mother.
2. The name of the herb, *basiliko* (*i.e. basil*), means the king or royal.
3. The priest lifts the cross up and blesses the four corners of the church, the four compass points, blessing the whole world!

**Some questions that could be asked:**

1. Who was St. Helen and why was she looking for the Cross?
2. How did she find it?
3. Why is the Cross important for Christians?
4. Talk about a time when you “carried a Cross.” (This would be better with older students, ages 10 and up).

**To accomplish this, a teacher needs the email address of the parents for all the students.** The teacher can email the facts and the sheet the day or evening before (of course parents should be told in advance to look for these). High-tech teachers may want to use twitter, facebook, or other means to communicate with parents. Lo-tech teachers can make a handout and distribute them at coffee hour or as class is dismissed (the trick is not to give them to the children. We all know what happens when a child gets the “note to give to parents”!).

**With some advance work and some basic organization, parents can become more engaged with their children’s formation in faith.**

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A frequent question at seminars is “*How do we get the parents involved with their children’s religious education and our Sunday Church School program?*” Dr Vrame offers a concrete means that does this and provides a review of the lesson. Please use it and then ask the parents for feedback. *PMO*